

May 1, 2014
WORK SESSION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
CITY OF PLATTSBURGH
MINUTES

Meeting commenced at **5:05pm**.

Present: Mayor James Calnon, Councilors Rachelle Armstrong (W1), Mike Kelly (W2), Dale Dowdle (W3), Becky Kasper (W5), Joshua Kretser (W6)-excused at 5:30pm.

Absent: Paul O'Connell (W4)

Item 1: Emergency Preparedness:

A discussion began with **Mr. Eric Day**, Director of Clinton County Emergency Services. Mr. Day explained his responsibilities and those of his office involve the functions of receiving and dispatching all calls, maintaining a master address of all county properties, emergency management (co-ordinate with state offices about national disasters and data collection for the Governor's office), maintain training and equipment for hazardous material team (most of his team comes from out city fire department) and maintain communication upkeep, upgrades of fire department and EMS teams.

Most audience and Council discussion surrounded the rail transport of crude oil from the Bekken Wells of North Dakota to the Port of Albany. These cars (DOT 11's) travel thru the City of Plattsburgh.

Mr. Day reported the DOT 11's are of the newer make and meet the new regulations of safety as set by Canada. He also spoke of the greater danger of propane and ethanol that has been transported via rail thru our area for a long period of time. He continued to say the Fire Service and Emergency Management crew and others a retrained and staying informed of the implications of the trains with a plan in place to respond. His office is also working to develop a railroad response particularly for ethanol. One indication was to evacuate and isolate to allow a burn off rather than to extinguish due to residual pollution. DEC would handle/respond to larger situations.

Audience members expressed a variety of concerns regarding the transport of oils/gases thru our city.

Mr. Day explained the circumstances and what led to the train catastrophe in Lac-Megantic Canada.

Councilors Kasper and Armstrong voiced their concerns since the rails travel thru their Wards.

Dr. Jerome Davis asked about moving the rail tracks to a more isolated area.

Mayor Calnon responded with thoughts of cost and the undertaking. He also believes we should regulate the train speed thru the city and not Canadian Pacific who is proposing a speed increase to 40 mph.

Thoughts of providing pamphlets explaining a response plan to those residents living in close proximity of the rails was suggested.

Mr. Day advised Canadian Pacific does not share their plan.

Councilor Armstrong asked Mr. Day if he should have a public presentation regarding the dangers and an evacuation plan. **Mr. Day** said that is a possibility.

Councilor Kasper asked about alert systems. **Mr. Day** told of the county using NYS Alert System but residents need to sign-up.

An unidentified audience member (#1) posed various questions about ethanol and crude oil, told of the tar sands being difficult to burn and asked about details of the NYS Alert System.

Councilor Kelly asked about whose idea it was to ship oil via rail rather than pipeline.

#1 also expressed concern about the length of trains being up to 140 cars in length.

Mr. Day believes they average 800 tank cars. #1 further spoke of our need to develop more energy efficient alternatives and how fossil fuels are very lucrative.

An unidentified male audience member (#2) who indicated he is not a city resident spoke of the situation being like a game of Russian roulette, how trains should be slowed down and about insurance company concerns.

Mayor Calnon advised the Mayor of Albany has addressed their own situation. He told of attending a Mayor's conference May 3rd and May 4th and believes this topic will be readily discussed.

Dr. Davis said we should take legal action.

Mayor Calnon responded we really have no leg to stand on.

Dr. Davis wants city to make a statement to both NYS Governor and the Federal government.

Councilor Dowdle inquired about responsibilities of the oil companies since they own or lease the tank cars Canadian Pacific transports. He also reported that four NYS Agencies are due to provide a report to the Governor's office this week regarding preparedness of spills from trains, barges and ships. The US Department of Transportation is due to issue a new regulation next week.

Ted Morgan indicated DOT owns the corridor, right of ways and manages the tanks.

Mr. Day told of the new DOT 111 cars possibly being longer in length and carrying more quantities of oil.

Councilor Armstrong spoke of needing a commitment to safety and to satisfy public safety.

Item 2: Cultural and Economic Development meeting:

Councilor Armstrong reported on topics of the meeting held on April 29, 2014 attended by herself and Councilors Kretser and Dowdle. Further conversation is expected for work session scheduled for May 15, 2014.

Item 3: Quality of Life meeting:

Councilor Kasper advised that the meeting of April 29, 2014 was attended by 16 community members, 3 city department heads and 4 City Councilors (Kasper, Kretser, Kelly, and Dowdle).

Councilor Kasper asked for approval of having developed a tree council that was met with approval. She also spoke of the overriding expressions of concern regarding property blight and how she was then ready to request additional staffing in the Building Inspector's office.

Councilor Dowdle also spoke of having the same thoughts and concerns prior to election. He spoke of recent data regarding Local Law 6 of 2007 regarding fire safety inspections and how the number of multi-family units has greatly increased since 2007.

Mayor Calnon spoke of code enforcement and an auditing of team of recent. He advised the city needs to better maintain systems of record. He suggested the fire department could do something to assist the Building Inspector.

Fire Chief Stone said he could do follow-ups (regarding fire prevention) to the inspections of the Building Inspector. This would need contractual consideration.

Councilor Kelly expressed concern that the poor people may have problems affording painting the exterior of their homes.

Councilor Kasper had advised, Department of Recreations Steve Peters had previously reported 25% of city residents live below the poverty line.

Councilors Kasper and Dowdle voiced their thoughts these residents (or majority of) are renters.

Item 4: Dog Waste Committee Report:

Councilor Armstrong presented a flyer covering aspects of responsible dog ownership, local dog training classes and locations of city's 2 dog parks. Flyer will be distributed at pet walk scheduled for May 3, 2014. She also inquired about purchasing dog waste stations.

Councilor Kasper spoke of providing flower tool kits to community youth. She and her mother will provide seeds. She asked Mayor if monies (approximately \$200) would be available to purchase buckets and trowels.

Mayor Calnon said he would look into funds and might consider his own monthly contribution be put towards this project.

Councilor Armstrong thought funds from via the United Way could support such funds.

Mayor Calnon indicated the city can accept money gifts and are tax deductible if for non-profit.

Councilor Kasper asked about the numerous photographs in the Council Chambers that display dead white men. She felt they should come off the wall.

Councilor Armstrong felt those and other photos are too large and do not represent what the meeting room and today represent.

Mayor Calnon said he has a plan regarding city history for his office and might include some of these photos.

Councilor Armstrong asked where the photo of us is.

Councilor Armstrong indicated she and **Councilor Dowdle** have discussed councilors being assigned as liaisons to the various city departments.

Mayor Calnon agreed that it may be time to do so.

Meeting ended at 6:45pm

[Minutes recorded and submitted by Councilor Dowdle]